

U.S. Department
of Transportation

United States
Coast Guard



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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

U. S. COAST GUARD

STATEMENT OF

CAPTAIN ALLEN L. THOMPSON, JR.

ON

**HOMELAND SECURITY: FACILITATING TRADE AND SECURING
SEAPORTS**

BEFORE THE

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY,
VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

TAMPA, FLORIDA

AUGUST 5, 2002

**CAPTAIN ALLEN L. THOMPSON, JR.
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Captain Thompson is the Chief, Marine Safety Division for the Seventh Coast Guard District. Captain Thompson arrives from his prior assignment as Commanding Officer of Marine Safety Office Tampa. As Commanding Officer, Captain Thompson was charged with carrying out the Coast Guard's marine safety missions for the West Coast of Florida.

Captain Thompson, a native of Darlington, SC, is a 1974 graduate of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, CT. He holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Economics and Management therefrom, and a Master of Science Degree in Management from the Naval Postgraduate School at Monterey, CA. Upon graduation from the Academy, his first duty assignment was Deck Watch Officer on the USCGC Taney, homeported at Little Creek, VA.

His next tour was as a Marine Inspector and Marine Investigator at Marine Inspections Office, New Orleans, LA. From there he was assigned as Chief of the Inspection, Investigation and Port Operations Departments at the Marine Safety Office in Wilmington, NC. In 1984, following Naval Postgraduate School, he was assigned to the Planning Staff for the Office of Marine Safety and Environmental Protection at Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, DC.

In June 1988, he was assigned as Executive Officer of the Marine Safety Office, Savannah, GA. Captain Thompson reported to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy for assignment as Chief, Cadet Branch in July 1991, and served in that capacity until June 1994. He then assumed command of the U.S. Coast Guard Marine Safety Office in Memphis, TN, and served as Commanding Officer until July 1997. In August 1997, he assumed duties as Officer in Charge of the Maritime Liaison Office, and Special Assistant to the Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command - Commander U.S. Fifth Fleet in Manama, Bahrain. Captain Thompson then assumed command of Marine Safety Office Tampa and served in that capacity from July 1999 until July 2002.

His awards include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Coast Guard Meritorious Service Medal, Coast Guard Commendation Medal with two Gold Stars, and the Coast Guard Achievement Medal. Captain Thompson was selected as Maritime Person of the Year by the Port of Memphis Propeller Club and is a recipient of the National Naval Officer Association's (NNOA) prestigious Dorie Miller Award and the NNOA Distinguished Service Certificate. His affiliations include: Life member of the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., and Life Member of the National Naval Officers Association.

Captain Thompson is married to the former Norma Ann Withrow of Greensboro, NC. They have four sons: Allen III (a Lieutenant Junior Grade in the Coast Guard), Michael, Phillip, and Christopher.



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Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee. It is a pleasure to appear before you today to discuss Coast Guard Homeland Security: Facilitating Trade and Securing Seaports. I am Captain Allen Thompson, Chief of the Marine Safety Division, Seventh Coast Guard District and Past Captain of the Port (COTP) and Commanding Officer of Marine Safety Office Tampa, Florida. With me today is Captain James Farley. He is the current Captain of the Port and is responsible for the Coast Guard's marine safety mission on the west coast of Florida. On behalf of the Commandant, Admiral Thomas Collins, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about the challenges we face in the Tampa Bay region with respect to our role in law enforcement and maritime homeland security.

Let me begin by echoing and reinforcing the Commandant's strong support for inclusion of the Coast Guard in President Bush's proposed Department of Homeland Security. My experience on the frontlines of our homeland security efforts have convinced me that we must take this important step to improve coordination between the various agencies that secure our borders and transportation systems. Closer quarters with our colleagues at U. S. Customs, Immigration Naturalization Service, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, and the Transportation Security Administration will help the Coast Guard improve its performance as the lead federal agency for maritime homeland security. It will not negatively impact our execution of the full range of Coast Guard missions.

Unique Challenges of Tampa Bay Region Concerning Port Security

Three Coast Guard Commands are responsible for maritime law enforcement and other Coast Guard missions in the Tampa Bay region. These commands are Marine Safety Office Tampa, Group St. Petersburg and Air Station Clearwater. As past COTP my responsibilities included maintaining the safety and security of nearly 380 miles of shoreline containing three dynamic, deep water ports and many more port facilities that provide opportunity for illegal entry and exploitation. The physical makeup of the region presents certain vulnerabilities to the seaports in the Tampa Bay (Tampa, Manatee, St Petersburg). These include an open 42-mile transit from sea buoy to berth and a narrow channel (<500 yards) with extreme shallows just outside the channel. Numerous choke points throughout the transit mean the sinking or scuttling of a vessel within the channel could effectively shut down the Marine Transportation System. 50 percent of Florida's hazardous materials come through Tampa Bay, 50 percent of all Florida's fuel comes through Tampa, and the Port of Tampa holds only a 5-7 day supply of fuel for the region's power and transportation uses. Numerous vessels carrying Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), Anhydrous Ammonia (NH₃) and petroleum products move through the region, and are subject to the physical layout of the regions waterways. Additionally, critical infrastructure such as the Sunshine Skyway Bridge and, approximately 70 miles north of Tampa Bay, the Crystal River

Nuclear Power Plant serve as landmarks and if attacked would create large regional disruptions to shipping, traffic, and power. Prior to September 11th, the Coast Guard did not typically board commercial shipping at sea prior to entering Tampa Bay. We did conduct Port State Control boardings of these vessels dockside to ensure compliance with safety and environmental regulations. Now we board at sea at least one commercial ship each and every day into Tampa Bay to its berth.

As the region continues to grow, it does so with the understanding that the bigger it becomes, the more vulnerable it is. Over the next few years the container industry plans to go from just a few thousand containers a year to 400,000. Cruise ships will continue to get bigger in number and in size, estimates call for the region's current number of passengers to jump to over 1 million over the next few years. Our waterfront facilities also have plans for growth with a new Liquefied Natural Gas facility currently in the planning stages. Growth and expansion impacts the Marine Transportation System and changes the way we manage our waterways and consequently how we conduct the Maritime Homeland Security missions. The Coast Guard is embarked on a multi-year plan to ensure we have the capabilities and competencies required to meet the challenges of this growth in the maritime community and the responsibilities of all of our missions. We realize that in order to be successful we had to work together as a service, as a region, and as Americans to face this common threat.

Power of Partnerships in Maritime Security

The Coast Guard fully acknowledges the power and importance of partnerships in defending against the threat of terrorism. Locally, working with Group St. Petersburg and Air Station Clearwater the Maritime Safety and Security Task Force-Western Florida was formed and led to the immediate establishment of an inter-agency task force for mobilizing and coordinating all law enforcement and private sector resources to enhance safety and security of the Marine Transportation System and counter the threat of terrorism to the western coast of Florida. The Task Force broadened the participation of federal, state and local agencies through cooperative partnerships, promoting the effective and efficient use of available resources, sharing of intelligence, joint training, and implementation of common operational security procedures. This structure, composed of more than 90 members from the represented commands, allows for seamless coordination and execution of all Port Security operations and traditional missions.

Since the attack we have strengthened relationships with federal, state and local law enforcement agencies including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, U. S. Customs Service, Immigration and Naturalization Service, Secret Service, Hillsborough, Pinellas, and Manatee County Sheriff's Offices, Tampa Police Department, the Florida Highway Patrol, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. We have engaged all regional intelligence networks and are actively involved in the US Attorney's Joint Anti-Terrorism Task Force as well as the Florida Department of Law Enforcement Regional Domestic Security Task Forces (3 on the west coast of Florida in Tallahassee, Tampa and Fort Myers). And it's not only been agencies of the government that have served to improve the security of the region. Members of the maritime community and industry have put forth a tremendous effort to improve the security of their facilities and vessel operations, and serve as critical elements in all port security and Maritime Homeland Security activities through their participation on the Tampa Bay Harbor Safety Committee and Port Security Sub-Committee. We continue to actively search for ways to improve our security posture through increased coordination and partnership with these key committee members as well as with other members of the maritime community.

These efforts provided for long-term sustainability and eliminated costly redundancies by maximizing efficiencies and enabled Coast Guard and other agencies to continue to perform normal missions without any loss of security posture. This organization was crucial in allowing a timely and effective response when a threat of a weapon of mass destruction attack on the port of Tampa was received. Key tenets of the security strategy are:

- Patrol and response activity is jointly coordinated by all agencies with jurisdiction including CG (from shore, water, and air), police/sheriff patrol, fire marshal visits, emergency manager planning, and related awareness and preparedness of other agencies.
- Personal relations were cultivated between key facilities/activities and the various law enforcement, patrolling, and response management organizations (jointly facilitated by oversight and LE agencies);
- Security staffs have improved recognition and support from management and employees (facilitated by management);
- The maritime community owners/operators assert affirmative leadership and emphasis on security matters (facilitated by COTP, state/local law enforcement, fire marshals);
- Physical and procedural security measures are commensurate with risk and consequences (facilitated by the owner/operator);
- Security audits are conducted (Facilitated individually & jointly by CG, and local fire and police).

Such a network takes effort to develop and cultivate. However, the cumulative result is powerful. The result is a very strong local and regional security and response management network comprised of thousands of eyes and ears, over-laid by the agencies of government.

Operational Overview

Following the attacks our direction had been to ensure the safety and security of the MTS, we continue to do this today. The Commandant directed the Captain of the Port to control movement of traffic in the ports and waterways, focus on high risk vessels including tankers carrying gas, oil, chemicals; focus on high risk vessels with concentration of passengers (cruise ships/ferries); ID and develop security schemes for significant physical security infrastructure (e.g. bridges, power plants, etc.) and reach out to others who can help us: Office of Homeland Security, Joint Forces Command, US Navy, state and local governments, the private sector, and the international maritime players. With the synergistic relationships of newly formed task forces, agency partnerships, and utilization of our available forces we are able to:

- Board or escort High Interest Vessels (HIV) including ships carrying LPG and NH3.
- Board or escort High Capacity Passenger Vessels (HCPV).
- Conduct waterside/shoreside patrols of passenger terminals & hazardous facilities.
- Conduct waterside/shoreside patrols of key power facilities including the Crystal River Nuclear Power Plant.
- Conduct regular HH-60 Jayhawk helicopter overflights of all ports, ship channels, anchorages, and approaches.
- Maintain security zones around moored cruise ships, the Crystal River Nuclear Power Plant, passenger terminals, hazardous material facilities, the Sunshine Skyway Bridge and monitor the US Army Corp of Engineer's "Restricted Area" around MacDill AFB enforced by DOD assets.

To cope with this increased workload we have relied heavily on our citizen sailors, recalling over 100 selected reservists to support maritime homeland security operations in the region. The over 2,300 Coast Guard Auxiliary in the region have also answered the call and have surged their activities to provide even greater support than the normal exceptional support we have come to rely on daily. We could not have provided or maintained this high level of service without the support of our reserve and auxiliary forces.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the United States Coast Guard is an integral component of our nation's homeland security efforts and the lead agency for maritime homeland security. We maintain the viability and integrity of the Marine Transportation System by working with other public, private, domestic and international partners so people and goods move safely and efficiently. The Coast Guard is committed to the continuing protection of our nation against terrorist threats, as well as maintaining our maritime law enforcement missions. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you and share the unique challenges that the Coast Guard in the Tampa Bay area faces today and for your continuing support of the Coast Guard. I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.